DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 376 949 PS 022 747

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TITLE Overview of Issues in Childhood Socialization.
PUB DATE Jun 94
NOTE 43p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Children; *Day Care Effects; Discipline; Economic Development; Economic Impact; Elementary Education; *Family Role; Foreign Countries; Modernization; *Parent Child Relationship; Preschool Education; *School Role; *Socialization; Socioeconomic Status
IDENTIFIERS *Caribbean; Jamaica

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the socialization within the family and school in Jamaica and other Caribbean nations. It examines the characteristics of Caribbean families, citing the effects of high levels of poverty and teenage pregnancy on family life. Child rearing practices, especially among the lower-class, emphasize discipline, corporal punishment, and an authoritarian parent-child relationship. Another factor affecting childhood socialization is the practice of having children reside with relatives or other families if the mother is unable or willing to care for the child due to occupational or other reasons. Children learn gender roles through the observation of the traditional male-female roles assumed in Caribbean families. The effects of the day care, preschool, and elementary school environments on childhood socialization are also examined, as well as the effects of economic development and modernization. The paper concludes that the socialization of children in the Caribbean has become a very complex process, with children being exposed to conflicting influences. (Contains 40 references.) (MDM)

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OVERVIEW OF ISSUES IN CHILDHOOD SOCIALIZATION

Hyacinth Evans and Rose Davies

Socialization refers to the process whereby an individual learns the skills, attitudes, values and dispositions to function competently in a particular society. The individual, as a result of this process internalizes the norms and values of that society or community and accepts them as valid for him or her. Although the learning of skills for productive roles as adults in society is an important part of the concept of socialization, more emphasis is usually placed on the learning of the values, norms and attitudes which prepare persons for their social role. All societies have an interest in the socialization of the young since this process more than any other influences the kind of society that it will become and assures or prohibits social and cultural continuity and stability. Socialization toward the desired or ideal mores and norms facilitates the creation of a civil society, and allows members to live satisfying and productive lives, in respectful relationships with one another.

Socialization is thus a very broad concept which involves the individual, the social processes by means of which the young person learns, the agents in the society who intentionally or unintentionally influence the individual and the roles, the

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attitudes values and norms which are learned or passed on to the young. The term socialization is a neutral one, connoting neither positive, desirable or problematic outcomes. The ideal of any society is for all children to be socialized in positive ways. But the outcomes of the socialization process can be negative and undesirable.

The study of socialization in a given society must make reference to the norms and values of a given society as well as to the norms for developmental processes derived from theories of child and adolescent development. Theories of development guide us in our expectations of children's behaviour at different stages of their development. Research on child and adolescent development can help us to understand the kinds of processes which can lead to successful development or to dysfunctional or undesirable outcomes. The norms and values of a given society represent the consensus on desirable social and cultural behaviours. However, since the norms and values of a society are continually being modified, the study of socialization must include an examination of the nature of these changes and the effect which they have on individuals and group relationships.

It is generally agreed that the most important agents of socialization are the family, the school, the church, the peer group and the media. These social systems have influence through direct and indirect interaction with the young person. The family

is usually regarded as the most powerful socializing agent, since it is the primary source of influence during the child's formative and impressionable years and its influence is continuous over time. This situation also obtains in the Caribbean, although there is concern that in some communities, the family's primary role in the socialization process may be shifting. In some cases, because of the family structure and the absence of parents or parent surrogates and the lack of emphasis on guidance supervision or instruction of the young, peer groups and the immediate neighbourhood or community may be more influential socializing agents than the family. In considering the socializing influences on the young, one needs also to consider the influence of the society itself on modes of thinking, norms of behaviour and conditions of life which surround the young (Radke-Yarrow et al. 1986). In this paper, we shall focus on the family, and the school though references will be made to the influence of peer groups and the society. The issues which we shall discuss will be related to these agents. In discussing each issue, we shall examine the implications for the individual, the society, the socializing process and the outcomes of socialization.

SOCIALIZATION WITHIN THE FAMILY

The Family within the Caribbean context.

The family is the basic unit of society. When it functions well and when it performs the socializing role adequately, society as a whole is more cohesive. When there is widespread malfunction, there are consequences for the individual and the society. In the Caribbean, there are roughly four types of family structures, each associated with socio-economic and life-style variables, values, aspirations and norms for interacting with and rearing children. We propose to use the following to refer to the various family or household groups that exist in the region: the marriage union, the common-law union (where the parents live together without being legally married), the visiting union (where the mother still resides in her parents' house), and the single parent household. Between 30% and 50% of household heads in the Caribbean are female (Massiah, 1982). Powell (1986) states that about 60% of children grow up with both parents, while about 30% are reared by their mothers only. However, the percentage of children reared by mothers only may be higher in Jamaica than in other Caribbean countries. Parents often progress from a visiting union to a common-law union or a marriage union. Thus children born later to a parent or a couple are more likely to be reared in a two-parent household (Powell, 1986).

The majority of children in the region are born into conditions of poverty - reflecting the economic conditions of the region. The vast majority of mothers - including married women - work (Massiah 1982). One-third of employed mothers are in domestic service, earning minimum wages in their respective countries (Senior, 1991). In Jamaica, 70% of the employed female labour force are in low-paying, low-skilled and marginal jobs. (Massiah 1982).

Children are seen as desirable and are highly valued by all societies of the region. There is much status and value placed on the mother role. Many beliefs propel young men and women to early childbearing, before they are economically, emotionally or developmentally ready for parental responsibilities. Child-bearing is further linked to the emergence of a strong self-image and a sense of womanhood which serves as a rite of passage (Durant-Gonzales. 1982). In many cases therefore children are conceived for the wrong reasons - for the purpose of enhancing the young man's or woman's self-image, rather than because the parents-to-be are ready and want to rear a child. Within the region, 47-59% of mothers had their first child while they were still teenagers (Powell, 1986). In Jamaica in 1984, 28% of all live births were to young women 16 years of age and under (cited in Leo-Rhynie, 1993). What are the consequences of such early child bearing on the social and emotional development of the child and the young parents especially the young mother? And what are the consequences for the child of such young people bearing children without the maturity, financial

resources and the knowledge of how to raise children? Early pregnancy and the assumption of maternal responsibilities may prevent the young woman from achieving some critical developmental tasks of this period. Psychologists include in these tasks the development of a personal identity, a feeling of self worth, the ability to establish healthy relations with members of both sexes, the desiring and achieving of socially responsible behaviour and the acquisition of a set of values and an ethical system which guides ones behaviour. These outcomes are realized through interactions with others, through engagement in a variety of activities which allow for evaluation by self and others and through guidance from mature individuals. Though early pregnancy may contribute to a feeling of self worth and strong self image in the short term, it may the process of socialization. Furthermore early teenage pregnancy traps the young teenager into a cycle of child rearing, low paying jobs and poverty (Durant Gonzalez, 1982). Some of the consequences for the child such as child shifting and maternal deprivation will be discussed in later sections.

Child rearing practices

As we have seen, children are highly valued in the society, and parents in general state that they want the best for their children. Nevertheless there are certain cultural beliefs about children which influence child rearing practices and the

socialization process. The biblical injunction not to "spare the rod and spoil the child" and the idea that children "should be seen and not heard" are adhered to by many especially among the lower - income groups. A punitive, restrictive approach to discipline and child rearing exists among all social groups but especially among the lower socio-economic groups. Obedience and docility are valued especially among girls (Brown, 1984, Payne, 1989).

Many parents confuse corporal punishment with discipline. There are many anecdotal accounts of severe punishment meted out for the slightest wrongdoing (see e.g. Brown, 1984, Sistren, 1986, Senior, 1991). This tendency to physically punish the child results not only from the beliefs held about children but from the very unrealistic expectations for behaviour held for young children. Behaviours which may be normal for a certain age, but which displease a parent can be severely punished (Grant et al 1983, Landmann et al, 1983, Wint, 1987). It may also be a result of the parents' ignorance of alternative ways of disciplining the child (Wint and Brown, 1988). In two-parent families, the father is the one who is expected to mete out corporal punishment. Many parents, some still in their teenage years are ignorant of what is required for the optimal development of the child. Many parents lack goals for their child's development and so rarely engage in positive guidance and direction (Brodber, 1974, Grant,1981). Thus, cultural beliefs, unrealistic expectations and lack of knowledge about what is good parenting as well as the realities of the home situation

lead to a process of discipline which is harsh, authoritarian. Parents often do not have the time or the inclination to reason and explain. This explanation and reasoning are critical to the child's understanding of the causes and consequences of behaviour, and the development of self discipline and pro-social behaviour (Harter, 1986, Maccoby and Martin, 1986).

What are the short-term and the long-term consequences of a punitive, power-assertive or authoritarian approach to discipline? Several studies have found a concurrent relation between punitive or power-assertive parenting and above-average levels of aggression in children (Maccoby and Martin, 1986, Lefkowitz, 1977), as well as low self-esteem and an external rather than an internal moral orientation. What are the implications for the development of pro-social behaviour, social competence and academic achievement in school? What are the long term consequences for individual and societal behaviour? And what are the implications for gender socialization when the male parent, when he is present in the home is assigned this harsh disciplinary role?

The life-style variables associated with social class - education, occupation, leisure activities, neighbourhood and housing and financial resources - provide the context for child-rearing. Parents' propensity to converse and reason with their children is also related to socio-economic status. The research which exists on parents' interaction and conversations with their children

relates mainly to the lower socio-economic groups. The evidence suggests that children in this income group have few opportunities for verbal exchange or extended conversation with the parent or guardian with whom they live, though they have ample opportunity to play and interact with their peers. Grant (1974) found that the majority of parents and guardians conversed with their young children of basic school age only once or twice per week. Commands are used rather than discussion with the child. This situation was more in evidence in the rural areas. Irregular working hours, physical conditions of the home as well as the cultural beliefs about children may account for this limited conversation with children. This tendency to exclude children from adult conversation is not confined to the lower socio-economic groups, however. Many middle class parents complain that children talk too much or ask too many questions - ignoring the value of such interchange to the development of language and the understanding of concepts. How does limited conversation, reasoning and interaction with adults, especially ones parents, affect the development of internal self regulation and discipline? What are the possibilities for changing class stratification and for minimizing the differences in social and academic competence with which children enter school?

Within some middle-class homes, especially those at the upper end of the spectrum, children are not routinely assigned tasks and responsibilities such as those within the home. Most household

chores for example, are performed by a female helper. Assuming responsibility for duties and carrying them out on a regular basis help the child develop discipline, and a sense of responsibility. When this failure to assign duties is coupled with overindulgence on the part of the middle class parent, what are the consequences for the young person's sense of responsibility to others and to self?

Child Shifting and mother absence

Child shifting refers to a change in the child's residence or parent/guardian. The child moves to a new residence and has to form new relationships with an existing family unit. Closely related to child shifting is the problem of mother absence where the mother or guardian moves and the child is cared for in some way by another person not necessarily a relative. As Senior (1991) notes, child shifting in various forms is characteristic of lower-income Afro-Caribbean families, and is strongly embedded in our history. From surveys which have been carried out, it is estimated that between 15 and 30 percent of children grew up with relatives or neighbours rather than with their parents. A mother may be unwilling or unable to care for her child or children for a variety of reasons. The child is very likely to be shifted when the mother is in a visiting union, and she has to migrate to a city or another country in search of work, leaving the child with a relative, friend or neighbour. In some cases, when the mother forms a new

visiting union and the child is not wanted, he or she is sent to live with relatives or friends. Sometimes, the mother willingly gives up the child in the hope that the child will have a better life. The treatment accorded the children who are shifted varies. When the child is accepted and nade to feel part of the new household, where some degree of stability exists, the child will most likely grow up in a stable environment. Brodber (1986) points out that such experiences are likely to produce individuals with the ability to relate to a wide range of persons and to adjust to new social situations. But many accounts exist to suggest that the child can live a marginal anxious and unstable existence. In some cases he or she may be used as child labour (e.g. Sistren, 1986, Senior, 1991). Abandonment of the child is as Brodber (1974) notes, the extreme form of child shifting.

What are the consequences of child shifting in those cases where child is not wanted or treated equally with other children in the household? Such an experience may have different impacts at different points in development. For example, the child may develop feelings of not being wanted, of anxiety, of loss and of longing for the absent parent. It may be difficult for the child to develop trust - an important developmental task of the early childhood period. The child may fail to develop self- confidence and self esteem. How possible is it for the child under these circumstances to develop a healthy rounded personality? Since the affective quality of the mother-child relationship influences the

child's cognitive growth (Maccoby and Martin, 1986, Estrada et al 1987), what are the effects of child shifting on the child's learning in school?

When it occurs under less than optimal conditions, child shifting and the consequent shifting of residences and relationships may prevent children from forming bonds of attachment with a loving adult or parent surrogate. Research on attachment suggests that children need to know that their primary care giver is steady, dependable and always there for them. Feelings of security and being cared for seems to enable autonomy in the child. With a knowledge of a mother's availability, the child is willing to explore, and take risks. Observational studies indicate that securely attached babies feel secure enough to explore their environment; insecure attachment is associated with clinging and passivity. Furthermore, securely attached toddlers later become more flexible, curious and socially competent and self reliant than insecurely attached toddlers (Karen, 1990).

The child is more likely to accept or internalize the values of the parent or parent surrogate and to develop pro-social behaviours when he or she identifies and has a warm supportive relationship with the parent or parent surrogate (Radke-Yarrow, 1986). Strong attachment means that the child has something important to lose when he or she violates the adult's expectations and wishes. Weak attachment means there is little to lose by violating norms. In a

recent study of the development of criminality in 70 Jamaican male adolescents, absence of the mother was the most powerful structural family factor associated with criminality, followed by frequency in changes in parental living arrangements and the existence of "negative parental role models" i.e. parents/parent surrogates who model anti-social behaviours. When these factors were combined with association with peers inclined to criminality, this affected the severity of criminal behaviour. (Crawford-Brown, 1993). Such evidence raises the question of the relationship between migration of the significant parent, usually the mother, personality development, discipline, as well as the relationship between child shifting, and aggression, delinquency and violence. It also raises the question of the relationship between economic stability , the stability of families and the socialization of our young people. These questions are particularly relevant to many societies in the region which are facing economic hardships and where the rise in delinquency and violence is alarming.

Child shifting can also lead to a fairly widespread phenomenon in the Caribbean - the "outside child", which is a result of men and women having children with different partners or of "male sharing". The outside child may be born to a single mother and a father who is already in a union, or the child may become an outside child when the father enters a new union. Brown (1993) has found that men are quite willing to "sacrifice their children for the present union, since they can become destabilizers of the later union".

Outside children are therefore quite vulnerable. Such family situations can be quite confusing for children, and can affect the child's sense of security, self esteem and a sense of belonging.

Gender role learning

Children learn about gender primarily through observing the roles assumed by men and women, and the nature and quality of the interaction between the two. If children observe sex-typed behaviour on a continuing basis, they begin to develop notions of what is and is not appropriate behaviour for each sex. Children also learn about sex-typed norms and expectations through direct instruction or by picking up ideas from adult conversations as well as from the mass media.

The family household is an important context for gender role learning. The evidence suggests that in two-parent families in the Caribbean, the man and woman are expected to perform different roles. The man provides, and his role is conceived of primarily as an economic one. The woman on the other hand cares for the children and the home and her role is seen as a nurturing one even though she may be a significant provider in the home (Senior, 1991, Brown, 1993). Men do not perform household tasks, which are relegated to female helpers or female members of the household. Since observational learning is an important process in gender role learning, boys and girls learn a lot about gender from the roles

which their parents play in the home.

Though children's involvement in domestic chores will vary according to social class and whether the setting is urban or rural, boys and girls in all classes are assigned different tasks. Girls are expected to help with domestic chores such as those in the kitchen, and keeping the house clean. Boys are assigned different duties such as chopping wood, or trimming the hedge - duties which are usually done outside of the house and which are regarded as more appropriate for men. There is in fact, a stigma against boys carrying out domestic chores. In Jamaica for example, there is a fear that boys will become or be seen as sissies if they are associated with domestic tasks. A result of this reluctance to have the male child involved in domestic chores is that boys are freed from these daily ongoing tasks in the home, confining themselves to duties outside. Some feel in fact that they are made to feel pampered and catered to in the home (Senior, 1991).

Thus within the two-parent family, boys and girls are socialized quite differently, and there is much sex-role stereo-typing in evidence. This is reinforced by the different roles which the parents play within the family. But what are the consequences of these differences for the self concept of the boy and the girl - how they come to define themselves as persons. And what are the consequences for the girl's self-esteem? How does she evaluate herself as a person and in relation to males? It has been argued

that the girl who carries out household tasks under these unfair and unequal circumstances and who is thus accorded subordinate status in the household relative to the male is socialized to become unassertive, subservient to the male, and dependent (Moses cited in Senior, 1991). What are the implications for equality between the sexes? What are the prospects for harmonious relations later at school and at the workplace?

On the other hand, despite any feelings of unfairness which she may have, the girl who carries out these tasks on a daily basis learns many things which the boy does not - such as a sense of responsibility, discipline, a sense of process in getting things done. Such qualities make the girl more disposed to adjusting to the institutional requirements such as those of the school. Since the society does not provide alternative opportunities for the boy to learn these skills and dispositions, what are the implications of this differential socialization for the boy's learning and academic performance in school? What consequences for later performance on the job and for assuming the varied roles as a member of society? The concern is that boys are brought up to regard themselves as superior to girls, but the girls are provided the experiences which make them in the long term more competent and able to cope. The long term consequence for this gender inequality may be dysfunctional for the male.

Within the single-parent family, there is evidence that fathers

though absent, play a significant role in the upbringing of the child. Parenting appears to have much personal meaning for fathers, though there is wide variation in their understanding of the social and psychological aspects of fathering (Brown, 1993). Nevertheless, the young boy or girl in this type of household does not have an opportunity to observe male-female relationships, except in the media. The young boy does not have the opportunity to observe a father performing the role of father and husband. Since observational learning is a very important process in gender role learning both the boy and girl from this household are not able to form an image of man-woman relations or of the father's role. The young boy and girl do observe males in the media. However, the images portrayed in the media are usually stereotyped, with males interacting with females who are depicted in a dependent role or as a sex object. If the father who is absent is also distant psychologically, then both boy and girl will form the image of a detached and irresponsible father. Such images, unless later altered, will affect male-female relations and the man's willingness to assume conjugal and fatherly responsibilities later on.

Recent changes within the family

There have in recent years been changes in the family in all socio-economic groups, resulting in part from the harsh economic conditions facing the region. These changes have some implications

for socialization. In the lower socio-economic groups, some parents allow or, through their absence, free their children to engage in a variety of income-earning activities - from begging on the streets, doing odd jobs before or after school (or instead of going to school) and engaging in illegal activities. Some live on the street. These children not only are absent or are frequently late for school. They pick up or are socialized into the "values of the street" -survival and getting money and material things at whatever cost. They are deprived of their childhood and the guidance, nurturing, caring and love that all children need. We have already examined some of the possible effects of child shifting on the emotional and social development of the young child. In the case of adolescents, such behaviour can lead to delinquency and criminality.

In all socio-economic groups, the extended family has become quite dispersed; as a consequence, its many roles in child rearing and caring are changing if not disappearing. Traditionally, community members especially in rural areas felt some responsibility for children in the community and felt it natural to discipline a child in the absence of his/her parents. Older members of the child's family were available to the young. They often lived in the same household and were emotionally accessible, so that the child experienced the influence of a range of individuals. Internal and external migration has changed this picture, and the child no longer benefits from this influence. Community members in general,

no longer display this sense of responsibility toward young people.

Adolescents in all classes are strongly influenced by their peers who in some cases adhere to deviant values and beliefs. Many adolescents of the lower socio-economic groups are attracted by gangs which espouse deviance and violence. These peer groups demand loyalty to the norms of the group. Such loyalty my substitute for attachment which is lacking in their lives. Adolescents, especially males conform to these norms in the face of weak family structures and weakening community influences. In Jamaica, male adolescents in poorer urban communities where there is a limited number of role models are strongly influenced by glamorous media stars and by 'dons' or men who engage in criminal activity but who are also in a position to aid the community in material ways. Many of these male adolescents who perceive that their social mobility is blocked because of poor educational opportunities and dismal employment opportunities adopt such individuals as their role models, aping their lifestyle and their values.

Among the middle classes, there is the increasing influence of the American culture purveying values of materialism and individualism. These values are communicated by means of the frequent visits of this group to the U.S.A. and through the media. They are adopted by a significant number of middle class adolescents. Since

peers exert some influence on these young people, the parents values can be undermined. Such values have traditionally included a belief in education, hard work and respect for elders. Adherence to the values of the peer group can lead to conflict within the home, and the erosion of the influence of the parent. Among all classes, there is a concern that there is a shift away from the value traditionally placed on education and social mobility toward more ephemeral pursuits and even illegal activities.

In recent years, most countries of the Caribbean have experienced a decline in their economic performance and have implemented structural adjustment programmes as a condition of receiving loans from the International Monetary Fund. These measures have had a severe impact on households and have in the case of Jamaica and Trinidad widened the earning gap between the rich and the poor (Boyd, 1988). Not only are households earning less, but less is being spent in real terms on the social services including education. Children who traditionally have come to school at a disadvantage are now even more at a disadvantage, and more and more young people from the lower socio-economic groups are failing in or dropping out of school. With decreasing economic and job opportunities, with a widening of the gap between the rich and the poor, and the obvious affluence and consumption of a few, these young people, especially boys who drop out of or fail in school are at grave social risk. Unemployment among young people between the ages 14 and 19 is roughly 50% in some countries in the region.

This social situation coupled with the weakening family structure and community influence and the absence of organized social activities for the young make it easy for the young person especially young males to be inducted into anti-social activities such as crime.

SOCIALIZATION WITHIN THE SCHOOL AND DAY CARE SETTINGS

Next to the family, the school is the most powerful agent of socialization in society. Young children under the age of three spend three to six hours per day in day care settings. Older children spend roughly six to eight hours per day in school at a period of their lives when they are most impressionable. Furthermore the school or day care and teachers have the power and authority to give rewards and punishments which reinforce rules, standards and values. In many cases, young people develop some degree of affection, respect or admiration for teachers and thus want to live up to the teacher's expectations. Schools or day care centres socialize not only by means of the official curriculum or the manifest goals. They represent certain values; teachers bring to the school their own values and beliefs. These form the basis for the rules, expectations, interactions, subject emphases, options which shape the young person's thinking and behaviour. Ideally, the school should socialize the student toward positive ends and to have positive developmental effects. This means that attention must be paid to the curriculum, to teacher-student interaction, as well as to the ways in which students learn. The curriculum varies according to the needs of the society and the context in which the school functions. But there are certain general principles regarding the way children learn or should learn and what children should be doing in school or in day care settings

which need to be considered if we are concerned about short term and long term outcomes of schooling. For example, when children learn in co-operative ways and in a tolerant, understanding and co-operative setting, they learn a great deal about how to work with others, and to take others' abilities and feelings into account.

The day care setting

There is increasing demand for day care as there is less emphasis on the extended family and more and more mothers of young children work. As noted earlier, a very large percentage of heads of households in the Caribbean are single mothers. More and more parents of the middle classes - especially young professional mothers - desire to enroll their young children in day care centres because they recognize the social and educational benefits. Children do benefit from day care, provided that the right conditions exist and children engage in age-appropriate activities (Phillips and McCartney, 1987, Rathus, 1988). Children 2-4 years old who have spent time in good child care centres are on average more socially and intellectually advanced than those who have stayed at home (Clark-Stewart, 1991). Young children should engage in activities and interactions which best serve their development in the long run. This means that they should be engaged in interaction rather than passive activities and work together on projects which help them to make sense of their own experience. The child should also develop social and communicative competence at

this age. Emphasis on academic tasks which require children to work alone, copying or memorizing information may cause the child to lose all interest in the continuing joy of learning (Katz, 1987).

What are the provisions for day care in the Caribbean and what is the quality of the care provided? Davies (1986) in a study of six Caribbean countries - Antigua, Dominica, Grenada, St. Christopher/Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent - found that only 19% of the eligible age group of children under 5 years had access to day care or pre-school facilities. In Jamaica, the percentage is much lower. A situational analysis of children conducted in 1989 (UNICEF,1991) and a more recent study by McDonald and Brown (1993) found that day care was available for only 6% of the 0-3 age cohort. All three studies point to the poor quality of the environment provided in many of these day care centres. The following features were highlighted - inadequate provision of play and learning equipment, insufficient use of methods that facilitate active learning, a large percentage (30% to 50%) of the staff with no knowledge of and training in early childhood education, and absence of a developmental programme beyond mere custodial care. Because of low wages, staff turnover is high as is the staff-student ratio. The facilities which cater for the middle classes are more attractive, stimulating and better equipped than those provided for children from the lower socio-economic groups. In the Jamaican study of 1993, it was found that children from the lower

socio-economic groups in general attend government-supported day care centres which were less well provided for and where disciplinary techniques were often inappropriate and authoritarian. Because of the high cost of privately funded day care and the shortage of such services, more children from the lower socio-economic groups than other groups do not have access to day care or pre-school.

It seems clear from the above that the majority of children in this age group do not have access to day care and especially to good day care. Thus working mothers may have to make arrangements which are unsatisfactory such as leaving the child alone with a helper or with other young children. These children do not enjoy the social benefits of a stimulating environment where they interact socially and intellectually with other children and with adults. Secondly, the quality of many of the day care centres suggests that those who do attend may not benefit sufficiently from the experience. Frequent staff changes may not help to develop a sense of security among children, and high staff-student ratios prevent proper and caring adult-child interactions. Furthermore authoritarian disciplinary approaches lay the foundation for aggressiveness and models a certain tone and quality of interpersonal communication. Under these circumstances, the child does not learn why an act is inappropriate. These conditions have consequences for the development of pro-social behaviours. Two very serious concerns are the difference in the quality of care provided to the different

social classes and the differential access to these facilities. The provision of more and better child care for the middle classes may perpetuate and even widen the differences that exist at this age - differences in verbal ability, cognition and knowledge of concepts, creativity with materials, and social competence.

Pre-school

The pre-school, otherwise called kindergarten, nursery school, basic school, or infant school, caters to children between the ages of 3 and 6. For the majority of Caribbean children, it is their first experience in a school or day care setting. The pre-school offers the same potential for fostering the development of the child as a well functioning family, under the right conditions. The emphasis at the pre-school level ought to be on the development of desirable dispositions and an interest in learning, the development of social and communicative competence and a readiness for later learning. Such readiness requires activities that develop such skills as visual discrimination, visual motor co-ordination, figure-ground discrimination and listening comprehension.

Pre-schools have generally received more attention from the respective Caribbean governments than day care services. Governments have developed standards, and have provided curriculum

materials and staff training. However, the majority of pre-school institutions are privately or community owned, and the problems that persistently affect the standard of operations of day care centres also affect pre-schools. The number of these facilities is still not sufficient for those eligible. Throughout the region, enrollments of 4-6 year-olds vary from 27% in Antigua to 52% in Guyana, 91% in Jamaica and 100% in St. Lucia and Grenada (World Bank, 1993).

Parents of all socio-economic levels believe that the pre-school should provide an early start for formal academic learning, which often entails much drill and practice, copying and memorizing of information. Many parents are intolerant of programmes which are based on principles of learning through play or interaction with others. The curricula of these schools reflect these views; schools and teachers feel pressured to implement formal academic methods in which children play a passive, listening role. Interaction among children is confined to the playground or to special activities such as drama. The concern is that children may engage in these formal academic activities quite willingly but fail to develop the right dispositions and attitudes to learning. Though they may demonstrate short-term cognitive achievement, these may not last, as has been demonstrated in the case of Jamaica (Gamble and Zigler cited in World Bank, 1993). Furthermore, such activities prevent the young child from engaging in more worthwhile activities which are more developmentally appropriate.

Although there is not much research on the effects of pre-schools, recent evidence on the readiness of Jamaican children for entry to Grade 1 poses some questions. The results of the 1989 Readiness Inventory which consists of nine tests of cognitive and psycho-motor skills revealed that for seven of the nine skills, only about one-half of the entering first grade students have mastery of these skills. Only 27% of children tested had attained mastery of left to right orientation; 68% had attained mastery of listening comprehension - a skill which is emphasized in formal academic programmes. Since 91% of Jamaican children in this age group are enrolled in pre-school, these results suggest that the pre-school in Jamaica is not providing the experiences that develop most of the skills required for entry to Grade 1. What is more alarming however are the gender and class differences already evident at this level. Boys on the average performed 7 percentage points below girls. And children from the basic schools - the school of the masses - perform well below those attending prep schools and kindergartens - schools attended by the middle classes. The readiness index of children from prep schools was 74.2% compared with 41.3% of children from the basic schools; 60% of children from the prep schools had mastered seven or more of the nine tests compared with 19% of children from the basic schools. While much of the difference in scores is attributable to home and family experiences, given the variation in quality and resources, the pre-school experience may also contribute to this difference. What then are the possibilities for equality of educational opportunity

and of decreasing the gap which exists between children from the different classes?

The school setting

The school refers to all the private and public institutions at the primary and secondary levels which cater to students between the ages of six and seventeen. Access to the primary level is virtually universal within the region, though the quality of the education provided varies according to whether the school is urban or rural and in some cases, whether it is private or publicly supported. At the secondary level however, few Caribbean countries have been able to provide access to those who leave the primary school. Enrolment at this level varies from 60% in Guyana to 75% in Jamaica and 95% in Barbados. The quality of the provisions varies depending on the type of school attended. Throughout the region, the majority of secondary school children are not enrolled in schools that culminate in the CXC or GCE examinations (World Bank, 1993). In Jamaica, for example, roughly 60% of students at the secondary level are not in the much valued traditional high schools which prepare students for the CXC or the GCE examinations.

Education at the primary level is intended to develop basic literacy and numeracy, dispositions such as interest in learning, caring for the well being of others, and attitudes to self, others and the community. Education at the secondary level furthers the

development of general intellectual and practical skills, broadens the student's knowledge, and lays the foundation for further education and training. Educators believe that schools should also develop and nurture qualities such as intellectual independence, critical thinking and reflectiveness, love of learning, and should cultivate children's sensibilities (e.g. Eisner, 1983). The official curriculum and other experiences within the school are the means by which such outcomes are achieved. But children learn more from school than what is prescribed in the curriculum. Students bring their own values, beliefs, and patterns of learned behaviour - the results of their socialization - to the school. Teachers who are also members of the society also bring their values, beliefs and expectations. All these provide a context for teaching, learning and behaviour in the school and classroom.

How well do the schools achieve the goals of preparing children for adult roles and for further education? Very little research exists to answer this question. Examination results can be used as a proxy measure, though not all countries have data on achievement at the primary level. In Jamaica performance on the Grade 6 achievement test by Grade 6 students showed that only 11.9% performed at Grade level and 21.9% at Grade 5 level in Reading Comprehension in 1990. In that year, only 7.5% of students performed satisfactorily in Composition Writing, with 59.8% performing barely satisfactorily (Ministry of Education, 1990). According to a recent World Bank publication, a major concern throughout the region is the wide

differential in levels of achievement according to location and gender. Levels of achievement may also differ according to type of school and social class of children attending the school. Throughout the region performance in the CXC examinations at the end of Grade 11 is also of concern, though some countries perform better than others. In 1989, the percentage of students passing Grades 1 and 11 of the CXC exam, (the grades originally set for entrance to tertiary level institutions and government employment) ranged from 18% in Guyana, to 35% in Grenada, 46% in Dominica and 55% in St. Kitts.

What these results suggest is that though there is universal access to primary education in the region, not all children are benefitting sufficiently from primary schooling and only the minority are obtaining a foundation for secondary education. Differences in quality, often related to social class further widens the gap between the social classes. Though most children gain access to secondary education, there is inequality in the type of education provided, and in some countries, only the minority gain access to the schools preparing for the CXC examination. With the very high value placed on education, this situation can create much frustration among young people. The performance in the CXC examination by those (in the minority) who have gained access to these schools indicates that in this respect, the schools are not effective for the majority of students.

Performance in the CXC examination is a measure of students mastery of academic content and some cognitive skills. But schools do more than this. They aid in the emotional, social and physical development of students. In the Caribbean, schools - especially traditional high schools - have sought to address the affective and emotional development of students through extra-curricular activities such as sports, clubs and societies. Participation in these activities, it is thought, develops social skills and builds character. Since accommodation is limited and participation is voluntary, not all students have access to these valuable experiences. Recent evidence from Jamaica suggests that apart from sports, most extra-curricular activities are on the decline in part because not many teachers are available to supervise such activities. Since schools are not publicly evaluated on any criteria other than performance in examinations, such decline goes unnoticed though the effect can be quite significant.

Since much of their time in school is spent with the teacher, it is instructive to examine the teacher's perspective on teaching and on students and the ways in which teaching socializes students. Research on this aspect of education throughout the Caribbean is sketchy and so we shall make reference only to Jamaica. Though there are differences among schools and differences among teachers within a school, the teaching method typically used in all types of school at the secondary level is the lecture method. Research conducted in all-age schools indicates that a teacher-directed mode

of presentation is dominant - in which the teacher talks or writes material on the chalkboard, in which there is only one right answer and that there is little problem solving and room for student initiative (Evans, 1998, 1991). In the high school, this method is quite prevalent and is referred to as note-giving. At the primary level, teaching methods may require more activity on the part of the students, but the teacher typically plays a dominant role in structuring, explaining and supervising seatwork.

Teaching methods in which the teacher structures and explains or writes material on chalkboard place the student in a very passive role, requiring him/her in the main, to listen and record. There is usually one right answer provided by the book or the teacher and there is little opportunity for the students to formulate questions or problems, to work with other students on tasks, to carry out independent work, or devise solutions. Though the teacher-dominant approach has merit in some situations, there are certain consequences when this is the main or sole teaching strategy.

At the primary level, as at the pre-school level, formal academic learning in the lower grades with much drill and practice and copying may yield short term cognitive gains at the expense of an enduring interest in learning, the development of a disposition be reflective, to question, to doubt and to seek out information. The learner fails to participate in other teaching approaches which are likely to develop other skills and dispositions. Co-operative/group

methods help students to cooperate with each other, to accept responsibility in a shared effort and to consider others - to develop in other words a moral orientation to work (Ames and Ames, 1984). Students should learn to present and defend ideas, to critique and evaluate - all essential qualities for participating in a community and a democracy. They come to see knowledge not as certain - what the teacher says or what is written in a book - but as the product of their own and others reflection. The concern is that the reliance on one teaching strategy in the main may not only short change some students who may learn best with other approaches, but young people may fail to develop skills, attitudes and values vital for later employment and citizenship.

Teachers' views of children influence their expectations and are communicated in subtle and sometimes explicit ways to the student. The interaction between teachers and students is a powerful means of socialization since the young person learns through observation and learns and develops ideas about himself and others in this way. Not much research on this aspect of school life in the region is readily available, and so reference will be limited to Jamaica. Teachers vary their expectations according to the type of school and the social class of the student body.

Research carried out in the upper levels of the all-age school - the school attended by children from the lower socio-economic groups - suggests that most teachers in this type of school do not

believe that children at the Grade 7-9 levels have the ability to learn or to master the curriculum. The home environment and the children's own low intelligence and lack of interest in learning are some of the causes of this. Such beliefs are inevitably communicated to students whose performance and self concept can be affected as a result. They no doubt affect the teacher's commitment and effort to get children to learn. Anecdotal reports from students from this social class in the other types of school suggest that these expectations are held of students from a low socio-economic background in other types of school. High expectations and a positive teacher-student relationship is related to high student morale and satisfaction with self and school as well as to achievement in the new secondary schools. The concern here is not just the question of achievement but the perception on the part of some students that teachers value some students more than others. When students believe that such unfairness exists. this may compromise harmonious relations among members of the different social groups.

Corporal punishment as a means of disciplining students is frequently used in the primary and all-age schools in Jamaica. It is used in a number of secondary level schools. Teachers in the all-age school state that they use corporal punishment in the classroom not only to maintain order but to get children to learn, and corporal punishment appears to be part of the pedagogical strategy of some teachers. But observation in these schools

indicates that it is used for a variety of reasons and on children of all age groups (Evans, 1988, 1991). There are many consequences of this mode of discipline which very often is coupled with verbal abuse. Harsh punishment lowers students' self esteem and creates anger and resentment. Furthermore, it is unlikely that teachers will engage in reasoning and a discussion of right and wrong when such harsh physical punishment is meted out. Thus opportunities for developing pro-social behaviours and understanding of the effects of ones behaviour are missed. The questions posed by the use of a punitive, power-assertive approach to discipline in the family are also applicable to the school. A major concern however is that the school, charged with an important social and developmental role in the society, does not act as a countervailing force to what exists in the family; rather, it reinforces a punitive power-assertive, authoritarian approach to relationships and to resolving conflicts. In a society where the levels of violent acts are alarmingly high, and so many persons resolve conflicts by resorting to violence or abuse, this trend in the school is disturbing. Teachers' use of corporal punishment and verbal abuse of children may be attributable to the crowded conditions of many of the classrooms, to the absence of textbooks and materials in some cases, and the fact that the students themselves often come to school with certain patterns of behaviour. But the consequences can be harmful for the individual and the society.

Students get ample opportunity to learn about gender roles in the school. As in the home, boys and girls are treated differently, since the adults in the school bring societal values with them to school. There is evidence that girls are treated less harshly than boys, mainly because they are more compliant and follow rules more willingly. Observations and anecdotal reports indicate that girls who are in general better behaved are given more responsibility within the classroom by teachers who are overwhelmingly female. It may be that the skills and the sense of responsibility which the girl develops in the home are recognized and capitalised upon in the classroom. Thus the boy who, as we have seen, is not assigned or does not assume a clear role within the family assumes a marginal position within the school as well, unless he excels academically. This situation makes the boy more vulnerable to the demands of peer groups and gangs, which do not usually adhere to pro-social values and beliefs. At a time when the academic performance of males falls below that of females at all levels and fewer and fewer males are represented at the tertiary and higher education institutions, this situation is a major cause of concern.

The socialization of children in the Caribbean has become a very complex process. The young child is exposed to conflicting influences, and to socialization experiences which do not always have beneficial consequences in th long term. The two most important agents of socialization - the family and the school - are not functioning as effectively as they should or as they have done

in the past. We have seen that in many households, mothers are absent or, when present, neglect the supervision and guidance of the child. In many homes, harsh, punitive and authoritarian discipline and child rearing practices are the norm. Even though such practices have immediate effect, they are likely to lead to aggressive and even violent behaviour later on. The socializing effect of schools has also changed, with the decline in the quality of educational provisions, the reduction in the availability of some curricular activities, and the change in the behaviour patterns of the students who attend schools. Some of these changes are attributable to the declining economic situation which have a direct impact on home and school. But changing values and attitudes - of parents, teachers and students are also a contributing factor.

Social and economic and value changes often lead to contradictions. We see these today in Caribbean societies, especially with respect to class and gender. While it is difficult to control or predict the economic future, individual schools and families - the important socializing institutions - must become aware of their influence and their long term effects on young people. Parent education and teacher education become even more critical. The survival and revitalization of our societies depend on this.

We wish to thank Professor Lilian Katz, Professor of Early Childhood Education, University of Illinois-Urbana, for her comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

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